

# Considerations in Assessments of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children: Avoiding Over- and Underrepresentation

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A Team Approach to Preschool Evaluation

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# What will we be talking about?

- What's the problem?
- What does the IDEIA '04 law say?
- What are some of the challenges evaluators face?
- What competencies do evaluators who assess CLD preschoolers need?
- What do evaluators need to know about a CLD child?
- What kind of assessment are appropriate?
- Time for Questions

# What's the problem?

1. Growing population of CLD students
2. Over identification and disproportionality of CLD students in special education
3. Some under identification

# What's the problem?

4. Standardized (or static) assessments places children in a responsive, unnatural mode (Cook, et al. 2000).
5. Biased assessment techniques
6. Lack of cultural reciprocity



# What's the problem?

7. Decontextualized environments for assessments
8. Failure to link with intervention
9. Failure to include family and family dynamics as part of assessment.

# What does the law require?

(PL 108-446, IDEIA '04\*)

1. Use a variety of current assessment tools and strategies.
2. Do not use any single procedure as the sole criterion for determining whether a student qualifies or not.

# IDEIA '04

## Assessment Requirements

3. Use tests and other evaluation materials that are not discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis.
4. Use standardized tests that have been validated for the specific purpose for which they are used.

# IDEIA '04

## Assessment Requirements

5. “Assessment and other evaluation materials” must be “provided and administered in the language and form most likely to yield accurate information... unless it is not feasible to so, provide or administer...”



# IDEIA '04

## Assessment Requirements

6. The eligibility may not be predominantly based on the lack of appropriate reading or mathematics instruction or on limited English proficiency.

# Challenges assessing CLD\* Preschoolers

- ◆ Domains of development are predominantly reflective of a Western approach to early childhood development



\*CLD – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

# Challenges assessing CLD preschoolers

- ◆ Age norms assigned to developmental domains are arbitrary:
  - ⊕ Primarily reflect white, middle-class child rearing norms (for instance, self-help paradigm is indicative of value of 'early independence' in dominant culture)

# Challenges assessing CLD preschoolers



- ◆ Families have different interpretations of what constitutes a delay or disability.
  - Misunderstandings and mistrust
  - Spiritual phenomenon
  - What does this say about the rest of the family? (Group phenomenon)



# Challenges assessing CLD preschoolers

- ◆ Families interpretations a delay or disability.
  - *Time limited phenomenon* (not disabled all the time or he will outgrow it)
  - *Acceptance of disability* (may affect whether the family seeks intervention)

# Challenges assessing CLD preschoolers

- ◆ Evaluators must determine if they are truly measuring all the skills this child has learned



*or*

only measuring skills they value based on own upbringing and professional training.

# Challenges assessing CLD preschoolers

- ◆ Evaluators MUST distinguish between a developmental (or maturational lag) and behaviors that can be brought about by learning.



# Minimal competencies needed by evaluators to assess CLD populations

(Chang, 2000)

- Knowledge of cultures, language, discourse, learning styles, cognitive styles
- Knowledge of family, community and support systems
- Understanding of cultural similarities and differences



# Minimal competencies...

- Understanding of regional differences
- Familiar with subtleties of the languages and dialects spoken
- Objective and not biased
- Understanding of the code of ethics and standards of the professional field
- Sensitive to different forms of discourse

# Minimal competencies...

- Have training in translation and interpretation
- Be sensitive and observant of verbal as well as nonverbal communication (proximics, gesturing and kinesics)
- Have multicultural literacy and world knowledge

# Minimal competencies...

- Ability to discriminate between bias, stereotypes, generalities and fact
- Must have knowledge of levels and stages of second language acquisition
- Obtain **cross-cultural competence**

# What is Cross Cultural Competence?

“The ability to think, feel, and act in ways that acknowledge, respect, and build upon ethnic, sociocultural and linguistic diversity.”

(Lynch and Hanson, 1998)



# Important stuff to know about your preschooler

- Knowledge of child's communication community
- Knowledge of first language and culture
- Knowledge of language acquisition history
- Knowledge of applicable dialectical differences

# Important stuff to know

## Immigration Background

- Home of origin
- Immigrants: voluntary and involuntary  
(Ogbu, 1992)
- Migrants

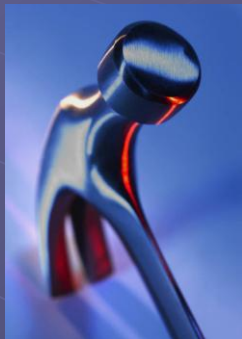


# Important stuff to know

## Immigration Background

- Refugees
- Non-refugees
- Prior schooling (family)
- Home language proficiency

# Things to consider when choosing battery of assessment tools





# Limitations of Norm-Referenced Tools

## Content bias

- All children do not have similar life experiences
- Content usually based on concepts and vocabulary used primarily in White middle-class school settings.
- Pointing to or labeling objects, pictures or actions is not necessarily a typical language experience for Hispanic children (Pena, Quinn & Iglesias, 1992) .

# Limitations of Norm-Referenced Tools

## **Linguistic bias**

- Discrepancy between the language/dialect/culture of the examiner and that of the child
- Linguistic bias in standardized testing has led to both over identification and under identification of disabilities (more likely, over identification)

# Limitations of Norm-Referenced Tools

## **Disproportionate representation in normative samples (Laing & Kamhi, 2003)**

- Standardized tests have not historically included CLD populations in their normative samples
- Even including a certain percentage of CLD children in the sample does not abolish the dilemma of identification.

# Limitations of Norm-Referenced Tools

- Static assessments DO NOT measure important facts that influence learning such as (Gillam, et al, 1999):
  - Maintenance of attention
  - Level of engagement during learning
  - Resilience to failure
- Difference between assessment OF learning and assessment FOR learning



# But... don't we need scores???

- You **DO NOT** need scores to justify placement.
- If the measures are not appropriate for a specific population, than the scores obtained are invalid and should be tossed.
- In the end, standardized scores rarely help in making instructional decisions (Lidz, 1995)

# What about Criterion-Referenced Assessments?

- It's preferred over normed tests for CLD populations
- However, “criterion-referenced measures are only as good as the developmental data on which they are based (Laing & Kamhi, 2003).”
- There is a dearth of developmental information on most CLD populations.
- We need to supplement CRAs.

# What's left?????

## Alternative Assessments!!!

- ▶ Ethnographic interviewing or ecological approaches
- ▶ Natural observations
- ▶ Processing-dependent measures
- ▶ Play based assessments
- ▶ Dynamic Assessments
- ▶ Checklists
- ▶ Developmental history
- ▶ Portfolio Assessments

# What is the focus of preschool assessments?

- Focus needs to be on the quality of our decisions and not solely on the scores.
- Use of multiple perspectives... including family members.





Focus is on  
what the child  
can do.

# Components to measure

- **Examiner effort** (how much aide is needed by examiners to maximize child performance?)
- **Child responsiveness** (how rapidly the child changes in response to the teaching)
- **Transfer** (the generalization of the task to other tasks and other domains)

# Preassessment and Assessment Procedures

## R.I.O.T. Procedure

- *Review* all pertinent documents and background information prior to assessment, including information regarding child's particular cultural/linguistic community.

# ASSESSMENT: Review (RIOT)

## ● Important Elements:

### ■ Thorough Case History

- Vision, hearing, potential physical, medical issues
- Languages spoken in the home (frequency and by whom)
- Parent/caregivers perception of student's communicative abilities
- Siblings/caregiver language skills
- Cultural influences



# ASSESSMENT: Interview (RIOT)

## ● R.I.O.T. Procedure

Interview - Use questionnaires. Ask critical questions such as:

1. How does this child's skills compare to his/her siblings at the same age?
2. How do this child's skills compare to other children his/her age in the community.

# ASSESSMENT: Interview (RIOT)

- Find out about child's language acquisition history
- Find out about specific cultural and environmental influences and experiences child has had:
  - ✓ Sociolinguistic issues including language socialization patterns at home;
  - ✓ Parent's educational level and socioeconomic issues
  - ✓ Exposure to books and family's level of literacy

# ASSESSMENT: **O**bserve (RI**O**T)

**O**bserve in multiple contexts with a variety of people. Check:

- Verbal input and output
- Language preference, dominance and discourse style
- Interactions (How does the child get needs met? How does the child function in his environment?)
- Mobility
- Problem solving
- Social skills

# ASSESSMENT: **T**est (RIOT**T**)

## *T*est

- Use informal assessment: wide angled to detailed
- Obtain language samples in both languages
- Select instruments for assessment battery
- Adapt formal testing procedures



# If we must.....

## Formal Assessment:

- Repeat items when necessary
- Ask student to explain answers... record ALL responses
- Test beyond the ceiling
- Attempt to complete assessment in several sessions

# Formal assessments...

- Give instructions in English and primary language if child is fluent or has limited fluency
- Rephrase confusing instructions
- Give extra examples, demonstrations, practice items
- Give student extra time to respond
- Have child explain answers

# The Role of Interpreters and Translators/Cultural Mediators

The primary role for interpreters and translators in the school setting is:

- to be a conduit for oral and written communications between LEP students and families and English speaking personnel.

# Interpreters & Translators

## The bridge between Cultures

- Interpreters & Translators are valuable sources of cultural information.
- They provide insight into child-rearing practices and nonverbal communication of the target language and culture (Fradd & Weismantel 1989).



# Essential skills for Interpreters & Translators

- Understanding of U.S. Culture
- English literacy and proficiency
- Proficiency in a second language and culture
- Work expectations and understanding of the institutional rules, requirements, and ethics.

# Interpreters and Translators

- Can be used when:
  - A Evaluator on staff does not meet recommended competencies to provide services to LEP/ELL
  - Student speaks language uncommon to area
  - No trained professional is available

# Interpretations/Translations of Assessment

- Sole reliance on test results should be avoided.
- Translation of tests should be avoided
- Consulting with an interpreter regarding relevance of materials and language patterns is advisable. However, the final diagnosis is the evaluator and/or team's responsibility.
- Interpreters/ translators should not be asked to perform their job at the last

# Questions?

